

OKINAWA MARINE

NOVEMBER 6, 2009

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Sgt. Joseph Fincher, a combat engineer with Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, hugs his daughter at a reunion in front of the battalion headquarters building on Camp Schwab Sunday. Fincher just returned from a deployment to Afghanistan after serving six months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. SEE STORY AND PHOTOS ON PAGES 6-7 Photo by Cpl. Andrew S. Avitt

Toys for Tots kicks-off

Lance Cpl. Kentavist P. Brackin
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — The Marine Corps Reserve's 2009 Toys for Tots campaign on Okinawa starts Saturday.

Ceremonies for the kick off will be held at the Camp Foster exchange at 9 a.m. and at the Kadena Air Base exchange at 11:30 a.m.

The program, adopted by the Marine Corps Reserve in 1948, has brought toys to children for Christmas for more than 60 years, according to desmoines.toysfortots.com/history.html.

"This is one of the few campaigns the Marine Corps is known for," said Gunnery Sgt. Suzette S. Smith, the Toys for Tots coordinator for the 2009 Okinawa campaign and an individual mobilization augmentee for III Marine Expeditionary Forces on Foster. "Not only is the military showing goodwill to the community, it is increasing the Marine Corps' visibility and recognition."

The Okinawa campaign ensures children of military families and eligible local community members receive a toy for Christmas, Smith said.

Last year's Okinawa Toys for Tots campaign exceeded its 10,000 toy goal by 3,000

toys. "Our goal is to exceed 13,000 toys this year," said Smith.

Collection boxes will be located at all exchanges, chapels, personnel service centers and a variety of other locations on every military base on Okinawa.

Any Status of Forces Agreement personnel, regardless of service affiliation, may volunteer at collection boxes, warehousing or special events. Fluent Japanese-linguist volunteers are needed.

Marines volunteering at collection boxes and special events such as toy distributions must wear dress blue bravo uniforms. Other volunteering service members must wear the appropriate dress uniform equivalent.

"We need lots and lots of volunteers to help with collection boxes, warehousing and the special events. We take toys for ages zero to 18 but are especially needy for toys for the older kids" said Cpl. Shivali Sharma, a volunteer coordinator for the campaign from the Reserve Liaison Office, III MEF.

Donated toys must be new and unwrapped.

For more information, call 645-8068 or e-mail shivali.sharma.as@usmc.mil.

Postal to be overrun with packages, mail deadlines approaching

Cpl. Rebekka S. Heite
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — With All Hollow's Eve past and Thanksgiving just weeks away, it is time to start thinking about when to send Christmas gifts home.

"The longer you wait, expect longer lines," said Chief Warrant Officer Donald Westberry, Marine

Corps Bases Japan postal officer.

Last year, the Marine Corps camp-based post offices on Okinawa sent out more than 57 thousand pounds of mail and received roughly the same amount between Nov. 1 and Dec. 30, Westberry added.

The about 60 civilians and 60 Marines working at Marine Corps base post offices island wide work harder and longer hours during the holiday season

to ensure holiday mail gets out on time, he said.

"We're here for everyone else," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Tommie Tate, MCBJ postal chief.

Limited manpower is not the only battle post office Marines face during the holiday season.

"We have limited space here, and we need all the space we have to process the next day's mail," said Tate. "So please come get your packages when

SEE **POSTAL** PG 5

INSIDE

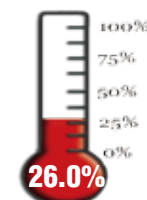


Marines share Halloween spirit with local children

Volunteers brought costumed and sugar filled fun to Onna Kindergarten students.
PG. 10

MARINE CORPS FORCES JAPAN COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN '09

- The goal is 100 percent unit member contact.
- As of Thursday, 4,859 unit members were contacted, approximately 26.0 percent of the total personnel goal.



A Birthday Message

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

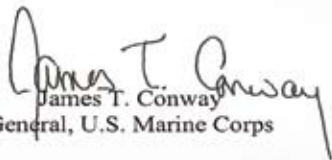
United States Marines represent the best young men and women our Nation has to offer. To be a Marine is to be a member of America's warrior class — to be one of the few who steps forward with the courage and conviction to face whatever dangers await. Our Nation expects her Marines to be ready when the Nation calls; to leave family and the comforts of home behind; to march into battle and thrive under austerity; and to come home under a victory pennant.

From Al Anbar in the west of Iraq, to Helmand Province in the south of Afghanistan, our Corps of Marines can always expect to be found where the fight is toughest. Such is our history. Today, as we write the final chapter on our victory in Iraq, we will increasingly take the fight to the enemy in Afghanistan and add new pages to our legacy in places called Delaram, Now Zad, and Garmsir. One day, we will return to our naval heritage and patrol the high seas with our Navy brothers. Such is our future.

As we celebrate our Corps' 234th Birthday, we first pause to reflect and pay tribute to those Marines who have given the last full measure in defense of freedom. We extend our deepest gratitude to our Marine Corps families — the unsung heroes who endure hardship and sacrifice so that we are able to go forward and accomplish any mission. We extend our appreciation to our countrymen who have answered our every need. And we celebrate the magnificent men and women who willingly and selflessly continue to go into harm's way to protect this great Nation.

To all who have gone before, to those who wear the uniform today, and to the families that give us the strength to forge ahead — I wish you all a heartfelt Happy 234th Birthday!

Semper Fidelis,


James T. Conway
General, U.S. Marine Corps

*constructive
opinion?* *interesting
story?*

Send the Okinawa

Marine your constructive
opinions or interesting
stories that would appeal
to a wide audience, and
you may be published!

Please submit opinions or stories
between 400-700 words.

Okinawa Marine reserves
the right to choose
appropriate material and
edit as necessary.

**OKINAWAMARINE.MCBB.
FCT@USMC.MIL**



FACT CHECK

SPECIAL ISSUE EQUIPMENT BAGS

Q: I was issued by my command a bag that looks like a backpack. Am I authorized to wear it while in uniform?

A: Yes, according to MCO PI020.34G, the Marine Corps order on uniform regulations, "only organizationally-issued bags, to include special issue equipment bags designed to be worn over the shoulder(s) may be worn on the uniform it was designed for per the commander's guidance. You may not wear personally-owned bags."

**BEFORE YOU TAKE IT OFF,
THINK ABOUT HOW WELL IT FITS.**

U.S. MARINES

The uniform represents more than 231 years of history and tradition. It's the identity worn by the courageous and honorable since the Revolutionary War; earned through discipline, hard work and dedication; respected by all. Keep your uniform on and continue making history. See your prior service recruiter about the many benefits and opportunities with the Marine Corps Reserves. Call 1-800-MARINES or visit <http://www.marines.com>.

ONCE A MARINE. ALWAYS A MARINE.



MARINE RESERVE

OKINAWA MARINE

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Camp Foster
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NORTHERN BUREAU
Camp Hansen
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Marines celebrate 234 years of faithful service



Mastery Gunnery Sgt. Noah P. Mason Jr., right, 50, traffic chief for Company A, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Camp Foster, stands with Pfc. Juan Canales, 18, a permanent change of station clerk with Company A, Headquarters and Service Bn., Camp Foster. Mason and Canales were the oldest and youngest Marine at the birthday ball for Company A, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Camp Foster, at Butler's Officer Club on Plaza Housing, Camp Foster Monday. Photos by Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Denny

**Lance Cpls. Matthew A. Denny
and Kentavist P. Brackin**

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

PLAZA HOUSING — Forty-two Marine Corps birthday balls will be celebrated on Okinawa this year.

Nov. 10, 1775, the Marine Corps was established, and 234 years later the Marine Corps birthday ball is the biggest celebration in the Corps.

This celebration is not thrown together overnight; it takes months of planning and numerous hours of preparation, said Lance Cpl. Joseph N. Kratzke, a trumpet player for III Marine Expeditionary Force Band.

At every birthday ball, there is a formal ceremony filled with traditions. Traditions at most birthday balls include a Marine band performing the national anthem, Marines Hymn, and other traditional songs, reading of the Commandant's birthday message and serving of the cake to the oldest and youngest Marine at the ball.

The first piece of cake is given to the oldest Marine and the second to the youngest Marine.

This tradition symbolizes where the Marine Corps has been and where it is going, said Pfc. Luis E. Arriaga, an administrative clerk for Company A, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Camp Foster.

A lot of the work to put a ball together on Okinawa is done by Marine Corps Community Services

which supports all 42 balls at Marine clubs island wide. The first ball of the season was Oct. 29, and the last one is scheduled for Nov. 28.

MCCS support includes seating charts, dinner menus, meals and programs for every ball.

The program alone includes birthday messages from six generals and a biography for a ball's guest speaker, said Dianne Villalobos, MCCS account executive.

"We have produced more than 18,000 programs for this year's Marine Corps balls," she said.

Club chefs, waitresses, bartenders, janitors and dishwashers also play a vital role in making the balls successful, said Alan Burn, MCCS food, beverage entertainment and special events director.

"We are sunk without them," he said. "They are without a doubt the hardest working people during a ball."

This year, club chefs will make about 15,000 meals for the balls, said Burn. That's about 500 more than last year, he said.

On ball night, dishwashers clean about 2,000 plates, 1,000 glasses and countless silverware, he said.

MCCS's Foster Photography will be taking pictures at all Marine Corps balls, said Maxx Gallo, Foster Photography manager and supervisory photographer.

This year, Foster Photography will have an Asian theme, separating the Okinawa balls from Marine Corps balls in the states, he said.

MCCS also provides transportation to the various balls. Last year, they transported more than 5,000 Marines to and from balls, said Mark E. Smith, MCCS motor transportation team leader dispatcher.

"We never have a problem getting all Marines home safely," he said.



Gunnery Sgt. Lanny B. Powell reads the Commandant's birthday message at the birthday ball for Company A, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Camp Foster, on Plaza Housing, Camp Foster, Monday.

234th Birthday Uniform Pageant and Cake Cutting Ceremony

All service members, Department of Defense employees and family members are invited to attend the 234th Birthday Uniform Pageant and Cake Cutting Ceremony at the Camp Foster Parade Deck Monday at 10 a.m.

For service members, attire will be uniform of the day.

BRIEFS**VETERAN'S DAY POST OFFICE SCHEDULE**

Tuesday - Finance service closes at 3 p.m. Postal Service Center window closes at 3:30 p.m.

Wednesday - Closed

Thursday - Finance service is 8 a.m. to noon. PSC window closes at 12:30 p.m.

Friday - Normal hours resume.

MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY MEAL

Monday and Tuesday a special menu will be served at select mess halls in recognition of the Marine Corps' birthday. Everyone on Okinawa is invited.

For more information or meal prices, contact Marine Corps Base Food Service Operations, 637-2474.

ILLINOIS CASH COMPENSATION

Service members from Illinois who served on active duty after Sept. 11, 2001, may be eligible for a one-time \$100 compensation for their service during the Global War on Terrorism.

To be eligible for the bonus, veterans must have been residents of Illinois for at least a year preceding active service. They must still be serving actively, be honorably discharged, furloughed to a reserve or be retired and must also have received at least one of the two medals awarded for service in the Global War on Terrorism.

Application forms and more information are available at www.veterans.illinois.gov/benefits/bonuspayment.htm.

DRIVE THROUGH FLU VACCINATIONS, MARINE CORPS AIR STATION FUTENMA

The U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, 18th Medical Group and Marine Corps Base Camp Butler are scheduled to conduct a drive-thru flu vaccination exercise Nov. 6-7 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Participation is voluntary and open to all Status of Forces Agreement personnel on Okinawa.

Participants will drive through Gates 1 or 3, to a holding area where participants will be medically screened and administered their annual immunization.

After receiving the vaccination, there will be a brief observation period.

For additional information, contact the III Marine Expeditionary Force preventive medicine officer at 622-7574.

BEATING THE BLUES

"Beating the Blues 2009" briefs, sponsored by Marine Corps Community Services Marine and Family Services Branch, will be conducted on each camp starting Monday - Nov. 25.

All Marines and sailors are required to attend, and civilian participation is encouraged. Call your local camp services for date and time of the nearest brief.

Contact Camp Kinser at 637-2350, Camp Courtney at 622-7381, Camp Schwab and Camp Hansen at 623-7179, Camp Foster, Camp Lester and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma at 645-5270.

TO SUBMIT A BRIEF, send an e-mail to okinawamarine.mcbb.fct@usmc.mil, or fax your request to 645-3803. The deadline for submitting a brief is noon every Friday. The Okinawa Marine reserves the right to edit all submitted material.

Marines volunteer at local leprosarium

Cpl. Andrew S. Avitt

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

AIRAKUEN, Okinawa—Marines and sailors from 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, undertook beautification volunteer work at the Airakuen Leprosarium in Sumuide, Nago City, Oct. 30.

"We show we care by what we do," said Navy Lt. Jeff Parks, chaplain for 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd MarDiv, III MEF. "Although not many of us speak Japanese, everyone can speak the international language of love."

This is the first time 3rd MarDiv has come out, said Parks, the organizer of the volunteer event. He said he hopes to visit the leprosarium five to six times a year.

The Airakuen Leprosarium is a national sanitarium for the treatment of those with leprosy, a contagious skin disease that can cause permanent damage such as loss of fingers or nose.

"It is a great opportunity to give back to the Okinawa community, and it builds good character in our Marines and sailors. It's always nice to see them put their foot in the right direction, like helping out the



Pfc. Johnathan Perez, left, a heavy equipment operator with Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Lance Cpl. Robert Erisman, middle, an intelligence specialist with 4th Marine Regiment, III MEF, and Lance Cpl. Daniel Comparetto, a heavy equipment operator with CAB, clean up debris on the beach at the Airakuen Leprosarium on Okinawa, Oct. 30.

Photo by Cpl. Andrew S. Avitt

community," said Parks.

The service members cleaned the grounds, removing leaves and other debris from the leprosarium's park and nearby beach.

"When we first arrived there was a lot of trash on the beach, different plastics and glass, but working together, it didn't take long," said Lance Cpl. Jonathan Caughey, an optics technician with Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd MarDiv, III MEF, about the cleanup.

After service members finished removing trash from their respective areas, they gathered with the leprosarium's staff to eat lunch, take pictures and receive words of thanks from the establishment's vice chairman of the residential council, Shinei Isa.

"Thanks to you all, the beach and park look beautiful again," Isa said,

"I would like for you all to come again, not only for beautification,

but for a more personal interaction and maybe a game of cricket," he said with a smile.

Many of the 18 volunteers said they would love to come back and look forward to meeting and playing cricket with the staff.

Red Cross seminar endorses volunteering

Lance Cpl. J Nava

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — Senior leaders espoused the importance of volunteering at an American Red Cross volunteer leadership seminar Oct. 29 on Camp Foster.

The seminar provided information about volunteering for anyone interested in donating their time, said Michelle Mays, Camp Foster Red Cross senior station manager.

The seminar featured lectures and speeches from distinguished visitors, representing different organizations throughout Okinawa. Speakers included Maj. Gen. Mary Ann Krusa-Dossin, commanding general of Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler and deputy commander of Marine Corps Bases Japan, and Navy Capt. Stephen Pachuta, executive officer of U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa on Camp Lester.

"We are here to share the idea of how important volunteering is," Pachuta said. "Volunteering gives people the opportunity to really help out in their community."

"Many organizations throughout the island utilize the help of volunteers and could not function properly without them," Mays said. "There are so many organizations on Okinawa that utilize volunteers that no matter what your interest are,

you can find something that you will like."

Some speakers spoke about the personal benefits of volunteering.

At the hospital, volunteer skills range from doctors and nurses to administrative technicians, Pachuta said.

"We use volunteers in all aspects of the hospital. The volunteers get real-life, practical experience when they volunteer; experience that they may not be able to get anywhere else," he said.

"Volunteers are critical to meeting mission success," Pachuta said.

For more information, call 645-3800 or e-mail campfoster@usa.redcross.org.



The American Red Cross hosted a volunteer leadership seminar Oct. 29 on Camp Foster. Photo by Lance Cpl. J Nava

12th Marines execute arty training in Fuji

Staff Sgt. Marc Ayalin
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FUJI, Japan — More than 350 Marines with the 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, arrived here Oct. 28 and 29 for Artillery Relocation Training Exercise 09-03.

The exercise allows the regiment an opportunity to hone its skills in artillery command and control tactics, indirect and counter firing standards and to integrate fire support with a scheme of maneuver, according to Col. Keil R. Gentry, commanding officer, 12th Marines.

The exercise, included Marines and sailors with the Hawaii-based Echo Battery, 2nd Bn., 12th Marines, which is deployed to Okinawa under the unit deployment program.

"Although this regiment has been training in north Fuji for many years, for most of the Marines and sailors, this is their first trip to the Fuji area," Gentry said.

"We are all looking forward to the unique training challenges offered by the terrain and climate of north Fuji," he said.

Marines and sailors have been preparing weapons, vehicles and equipment in preparation for the deployment.

"Before arriving here, we performed limited technical inspections and did preventive maintenance on 26 Humvees and seven-ton trucks. For some of us who are new to this unit, preparing the vehicles was a little challenging but for the most part it was easy," said Staff Sgt. Jacob Nolley, motor transport chief for Headquarters Battery, 12th Marines.

Following logistical preparations, the regiment's key objective is command and control during the live-fire portion of the exercise, which started Monday and goes to Wednesday, said Capt. Patrick Spencer, operations officer for 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, and lead planner for the exercise.

"The critical take



Pvt. Larry Alqueza, left, and Lance Cpl. Jonathan Wilson, both cannon crewmen with Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, hold the front end of an M777A2 Howitzer at the 3rd Bn., 12th Marines motor pool on Camp Hansen Oct. 23. The howitzers were transported to Camp Fuji, Japan, for North Fuji Artillery Relocation Exercise.

Photo by Cpl. John A. Chretien, Combat Camera

away from this exercise is to have the regiment working together, mainly through communication, and validate the mission essential tasks to bring us fundamentally where we need to be as an artillery unit," Spencer said.

The training encompasses several phases that begin with battery-level maneuvering and then graduates to battalion- and regimental-size tactics, according to Spencer.

"The phased approach to training is very important because the pace helps us refresh our skills and helps us identify processes we can improve," said Capt. Todd Litvin, Echo Battery commander. "It also allows us to build a solid foundation so we can reach more advanced levels."

The regiment is also scheduled to fire crew-served weaponry to improve defensive maneuvers.

"While our primary focus is artillery, we need

to have teams that are proficient in employing our crew-served weapons to defend our battery positions," added Litvin.

Historically, artillery training was conducted in Okinawa but was relocated to the mainland and has been held on various ranges throughout mainland Japan since 1997, according to Lt. Col. Sean Wester, commanding officer, 3rd Bn., 12th Marines.

The Fuji Maneuver Area, which consists of the 12,000 acre North Fuji Maneuver Area and the 22,000 acre East Fuji Maneuver Area, is jointly used by U.S. forces and the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force.

"Our battalion appreciates the opportunity afforded by the government of Japan and the surrounding communities to contribute to this legacy and prepare for our mission," said Maj. Russell Buttram, executive officer, 3rd Bn., 12th Marines.

POSTAL FROM PG 1

they come in; don't wait until the day before Christmas."

Proper packaging will save time for postal employees and customers while reducing the risk of heartache due to broken packages, Westberry said.

"The best thing when you are sending an item in the mail is to pick an appropriately-sized box," Westberry said. "The box should be proportionate to the size of the item and padded with wadded paper or bubble wrap. Make sure you tape all seams."

Other packaging tips from www.usps.com include:

- Make sure packages are able to withstand processing without the contents or packaging breaking.
- Wrap each item separately when packing more than one item in the same box.
- Close and shake the box to see if there is enough cushioning. If items are shifting, add more cushioning.
- Mark packages "Fragile" in large print on the outside of the box when shipping breakable materials.
- When re-using a box, make sure previous labels and markings are covered before mailing.
- Mark "Perishable" on packages that contain food or other items that can spoil.
- Place an extra address label with the delivery and return address inside the package. This ensures the safe return of an item that could not be delivered should the outside label be damaged or fall off.
- Always use tape designed for sealing shipping boxes. Do not use string, cellophane or masking tape to seal packages.
- Packages can weigh up to 70 pounds and measure up to 130 inches in combined length and width. Make sure the width is measured around the largest point of the package.

Another key to sending mail stateside is the U.S. Customs form, which can be picked up days prior to mailing out a package, but does not have to be on the outside of the box where the recipient can read what is in the box.

If you don't want people to know what's inside, whether because it is expensive or a gift, you can fill out the internal customs form," said Staff Sgt. Ramon Arredondo, MCBJ postal inspector.

To send a package stateside with the internal customs form, request Postal Service Form 2976 and PS Form 2976A from the front desk of any post office.

Then follow PS Form 2976's instructions, "Affix only the upper portion of this label (to the outside of the box) and complete a PS Form 2976A. Enclose the completed (form) inside the item."

Post Office Marines also have advice for receiving mail this holiday season.

"If your package is damaged, let us know immediately," said Westberry. "Don't take it home."

Also, remember this holiday season is a busy time for everyone, especially those who work at the post office, he said.

"Have patience, not only when sending out mail, but when waiting on packages to arrive," he added.

See the diagram below for shipping deadlines from Okinawa and the United States for items to be received by Dec. 25.

For further information on sending out packages or any postal concerns, call 637-2468.



300 Marines return home safely from Afg



Regimental Combat Team 3 Marines unload and sort their gear after returning from a six-month to year long Afghanistan deployment Sunday. After they located their return to their home bases on Marine Corps camps throughout Okinawa. Photo by Cpl. Rebekka Heite



Cpl. Christopher Hammond, a motor transport operator with Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, and wife Mayumi hug their 2-month-old son Christopher Masa Hammond at a homecoming reunion on Camp Schwab for Marines returning from Afghanistan Sunday. Photo by Cpl. Andrew S. Avitt

Public Affairs Office REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 3

Approximately 300 Okinawa-based Marines returned from an Afghanistan deployment Sunday.

About 170 of the returning Marines were attached to Regimental Combat Team 3's headquarters element and more than 100 were attached to RCT-3's 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, said 1st Lt. Kurt Stahl, RCT-3's public affairs officer.

In Helmand province, Afghanistan, Marines orchestrated the largest helicopter insertion since the Vietnam War. During the July 2 insertion, Marines spread into the Helmand River valley to secure what was considered one of the most violent provinces in all of Afghanistan at the time, Stahl said.

RCT-3 spearheaded Operation Khanjar – designed to deliver a swift and lethal blow to the insurgency– marking the highly-anticipated unleashing of a

strengthened Marine Corps force there, said Stahl.

In November 2008, 3rd Marines deployed as the command element of Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force – Afghanistan, with more than 2,000 Marines and sailors serving as a bridging force for the larger 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade that took control in May. After turning over authority to the MEB, 3rd Marines became the headquarters of RCT-3, the MEB's ground combat element.

Although Operation Khanjar was extremely successful, a great deal of work still needed to be accomplished, said Lt. Col. Daniel Yaroslaski, commander to 3rd Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force.

Follow-on clearing operations ensued in some areas to weed out Taliban militants and give Afghan civilians the security and freedom of movement required to participate in the Aug. 20 national



Staff Sgt. Pedro Rodriguez, with Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, meeting his 6-week-old son, Isreal, from a deployment to Afghanistan Sunday. Photo by Cpl. Rebekka Heite

and provincial elections. In several areas, Marines were able to immediately transition from offensive operations to humanitarian missions by establishing positive relationships with local elders.

Progress in a counterinsurgency struggle took place in three phases – clearing, holding and building.

ghanistan

2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment

The area of operations for 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines, was the largest for any single battalion within RCT-3, roughly the size of Vermont, and the only one with any substantial mountains. The Marines were also the only unit that extended into multiple districts and provinces.

Marines began shaping operations in the region to build up for a definitive strike on insurgents. In some locations, such as Deleram, Farah province, Marines maintained positive relationships with the local populace. Areas such as the abandoned city of Now Zad, Helmand province, were more challenging. The city had been abandoned by its former civilian populace, but a number of neighboring villages possessed a substantial neutral population. The Marines of 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines, were the first in the area with enough ability to interact with these villagers. After their arrival, Marines developed relationships with the citizens of Kwaja Jamal and Dahanah, villages surrounding Now Zad.

"It puts a human face on who we are, and it may make them less likely to help the Taliban," said 1st Lt. Jared Sprunk, an infantry officer with Company G, 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines. "We are doing everything here – the full spectrum of counterinsurgency operations."

After discerning a pattern of life for the insurgents in the Now Zad region, 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines, launched a major offensive, Operation Eastern Resolve II, in August. During the operation, which started a few weeks before national and provincial elections, Marines established a position between the insurgents and the village of Dahanna. Another major achievement of the operation was establishing a presence in the Dahanna Pass, which served as a logistical re-supply route for the insurgency. The Marines' efforts provided the security required to allow people to vote in the Aug. 20 elections.

The final major operation 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines, conducted was clearing the Buji Bhasht Pass during Operation Germinate. Company F, 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines, cleared the route through the pass to Golestan and Deleram to create more freedom of movement for locals.

RCT-3 to RCT-7

RCT-3 saw significant progress in southern Afghanistan during the course of the deployment, said 1st Lt. Kurt Stahl, RCT-3's public affairs officer.

After gaining a foothold and laying the early foundations for future success in the region, RCT-7 from Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twenty-nine Palms, Calif., arrived and relieved RCT-3 as the MEB's ground combat element Oct. 24, Stahl said.

"I am grateful for the opportunity of 3rd Marines to deploy as a headquarters for SPMAGTF-A and RCT-3, especially since the regimental headquarters hasn't deployed since the Gulf War," said Col. Duffy W. White, commanding officer of RCT-3.



gear, they left Kadena Air Base to



Company A, Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, after his 7-year-old son, Pedro, tight after for the first time. Rodriguez returned as the administrative chief for

Cpl. Rebekka Heite

Steps occurred more rapidly in some regions and each population center provided unique challenges, said Stahl. But in all areas the Marines' focus remained protecting the civilian population. All RCT-3 subordinate commands experienced a unique environment but adapted to their specific situations and took the initiative from the insurgency, he said.



A number of commanding generals on Okinawa greet returning Regimental Combat Team 3 Marines as they step off the plane that brought them home to their families and friends Sunday. Photo by Cpl. Rebekka Heite

"The RCT-3 success is a good example of how well the Marine Corps has adapted to the counterinsurgency fight," White said.

"I know RCT-7 is going to come in and exploit any successes we've had and continue to drive a wedge between the insurgency and the Afghan people," White said.

Though 3rd Marine Regiment is based in Hawaii and many of its Marines will redeploy to Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay, roughly half of RCT-3 was composed of individual augments who will be returning to their parent commands throughout Okinawa.

Some of these Marines have been serving in southern Afghanistan for a year, others for six months.



Cpl. Kyle Vonloh, center, amphibious assault vehicle crew chief with Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, sits in an AAV with Lance Cpl. Andrew Donohue, left, and Pfc. Brian Myers, both AAV crewmembers. Photo by Lance Cpl. J Nava

Combat Assault Battalion provides one-of-a-kind support

Lance Cpl. J Nava
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

Combat Assault Battalion's motto says it all, "Sui Generis," which is Latin for one of a kind.

CAB, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, is the only battalion-sized combat assault unit in the Marine Corps. The battalion provides 3rd MarDiv with engineers, amphibious assault vehicle support and light armored reconnaissance vehicle support as well as motor transport, heavy equipment, communications and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense Marines.

"CAB provides the engineers, LARs and AAVs for the entire division," said Lt. Col. Dan Yaroslaski, commanding officer of CAB. "We provide three unique capabilities that the division would not have itself."

At 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions, stateside, engineers, LARs and AAVs comprise battalions of their own, he said adding that here CAB does it all.

CAB was activated Feb. 16, 1942, at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., as 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

The Marines of the battalion participated in several World War II campaigns including Guadalcanal, Finschhafen, New Britain, Peleliu and Okinawa.

The battalion continued its fighting legacy at the Chosin Reservoir and the Pusan perimeter in the Korean War and in Danang during the Vietnam War.

As the 1st Amphibian Assault Battalion during the Vietnam War, CAB Marines con-

ducted operations which earned its Marines the nickname "AmGrunts."

AmGrunts were Marines who worked with amphibious assault tractors but also dismounted and carried on missions as infantrymen.

"Playing such a unique role in the Marine Corps brings its share of challenges, but we take them on and overcome them every day," Yaroslaski said.

"From pistol training to demolitions ranges, we do a little bit of everything."

- Staff Sgt. Ericson Ariaga

The battalion finally found its home on Camp Schwab in July 1969 and after several name changes the battalion was designated CAB Oct. 5, 1994.

Made up of a headquarters and service company, a combat engineer company, an LAR company and an AAV company, CAB's mission is to conduct and support amphibious operations by landing and transporting surface assault elements and equipment to inland objectives while conducting close combat engineer support, light armored reconnaissance and limited offensive and defensive operations.

"CAB is the only forward-deployed unit that does what we do," said 1st Sgt. Tim Henshaw, acting sergeant major of CAB.

"In the past, CAB has even deployed as its own task force," he said.

"CAB is an organization that you won't find

anywhere else in the Marine Corps," said Gunnery Sgt. Garrett Robinson, an AAV crewman with 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division, assigned to CAB through the unit deployment program. "It brings all these different assets into one like no one else can. CAB is a unique blend of military occupational specialties and Marines."

The Marines at CAB overcome diversity among themselves and their respective jobs to succeed in their mission, said Staff Sgt. Ericson Ariaga, the CAB training chief and a tank crewman.

CAB also plays host to many Marines on the unit deployment program.

"There are so many different people from so many different MOSs working together here. Very rarely do you see a tanker and an engineer working together," said Sgt. Robert Stoecker, a CAB combat engineer.

"We get to know each other and each others' jobs very well. It's a unique experience working here," he said.

Keeping up to par with training standards at a battalion with such a diverse conglomeration of Marines can sometimes be difficult, explained Ariaga.

"Training-wise, CAB is very busy. Every Marine has to get trained up on basic Marine skills and also for their job," Ariaga said. "From pistol training to demolitions ranges, we do a little bit of everything."

The diverse array of Marines creates familial bonds, said Master Sgt. Joseph Chiaramonte, the CAB logistics chief.

"We're a tight knit community here," Chiaramonte said. "We're like one big family."

Festival brings ancient traditions to Shuri Castle

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Dengrier M. Baez

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

An ancient castle with intriguing architecture was the main stage for performers who brought to life Okinawan traditions at the Shuri Castle Festival in Shuri Castle Park Sunday.

Shuri Castle was built on a plateau about 120 meters above sea level. It is the largest of Okinawa's castles. The castle compound has an elliptical shape and about 350 meters east-west by 200 meters north-south.

It is uncertain exactly when the castle was first built, but excavation work indicates that a precursor of Shuri Castle existed by the second half of the 14th century, according to the Wonder Okinawa Web site.

The castle was destroyed in 1945 during World War II's Battle of Okinawa and later rebuilt to its original specifications.

The festival celebrates the Ryukyu Kingdom era, which dates back to the 1600's, when three Sanzan kingdoms were united peacefully by King Sho Hashi, according to the Wonder Okinawa Web site.

Shuri Castle, the center of royal activity, was home to 19 Ryukyuan kings for nearly 500 years.

During the festival, Yotsudake, Zei, Shiki Kuduchi, Karaya Bushi, Nuchibana and Kanayo Amakawa, traditional Okinawa and Ryukyu dances, were performed for the crowd.

The festival was an eye-opening experience for some visiting from South America.

"Back in my country when we think of Japan, we think (of a) busy, very hectic



American and Japanese tourists walk through Shuri Castle after attending the Shuri Castle Festival held at the Shuri Castle Park Sunday.

place like Tokyo, but that's not really the case when you come here," said Claudio Hernandez, a tourist with Princess Cruises, and an Argentina native. "Okinawa is really a beautiful place."

Ryukyu dances illustrated the centuries of Okinawan history and culture, in most part, influenced by the Chinese.

"The performers were really good, and it seems really peaceful the way they dance," said Lance Cpl. Cy Kranak with Combat Camera, Company B, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Camp Foster.

"Shuri Castle's ancient architecture makes you feel like you are back in time as you watched the show," he said.



Dancers, wearing costumes used by royalty during the Ryukyuan era, perform Yotsudake, a traditional Okinawa dance, in the Shuri Castle courtyard at Shuri Castle Park in Okinawa Sunday.



Students from Onna Kindergarten in Onna Village trick-or-treat at make-shift doors in their school during a visit from Marines Oct. 27.

Marines share festive spirit with kindergarten students

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Jovane M. Holland

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

Dressed in costumes ranging from Ghostbusters to Mother Earth, nine Marines from various units on Okinawa volunteered to visit students at Onna Kindergarten in Onna Village Oct. 27.

The purpose of the visit was to share the Halloween spirit with Japanese youth, according to Kaori Tanahara, the community relations specialist at Camp Hansen.

"Halloween has become a lot more popular here in Okinawa due to (the) American influence," Tanahara said. "Providing interaction between different cultures during the holiday gives a sense of unity."

During their visit, the Marines taught students the phrase "trick-or-treat," handed out candy, sang and danced with the children.

"I loved that we did a Halloween event," said Lance Cpl. Alycia Polotta, an analyst with 3rd Intelligence Battalion, III Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, III MEF. "The children had fun and it was a fun and effective way to pass information and teach them about American traditions."

Tanahara said although the visit was full of fun, there was an underlying lesson of educating the students about interacting with and learning from different cultures.

"The Marines play with the kids and help them with their English," Tanahara said. "This is important because school-age children are still growing, and it benefits them to see, interact and learn with people from a different cultural background."

Marines have been volunteering at Onna Kindergarten once a month for the past two years. Tanahara said the visits will continue.

"Everyone benefits from the Marines volunteering with the children," Tanahara said. "We want them to continue visiting for as long as they'll have us."



Pfc. Abner Vargas, 22, a camp guard sentry with III Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, III MEF, at Camp Hansen, introduces himself to the students of Onna Kindergarten during a volunteer hour at the school Oct. 27. Vargas, along with eight other Marines, wore costumes during their visit to the school to help the children celebrate Halloween.

Marines attend Hikarigaoka Nursing Home appreciation dinner

Lance Cpl. Jovane M. Holland

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

The staff of Hikarigaoka Nursing Home in Kin Town showed appreciation for the volunteer efforts of the Marines of 7th Communication Battalion, III Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, III MEF, by hosting a tri-annual Moon Viewing Social Oct. 22.

Marines with 7th Comm. Bn. have volunteered to maintain the nursing home's grounds since 2002.

About 25 7th Comm. Bn. Marines gathered at the nursing home courtyard for a night of eating, dancing, volleyball and karaoke.

"Okinawa pays much respect to their

elders, so it is much appreciated when the Marines contribute," said Kaori Tanahara, the community relations specialist for Camp Hansen. "Their service shows they are being sensitive to our culture."

Haruo and Ayako Ginoza, the directors of Hikarigaoka Nursing Home, said they've thoroughly appreciated the thoughtfulness of the volunteering Marines.

"The Marines have volunteered with us for a long time," said Ayako Ginoza.

"We want to express our appreciation with this dinner, and show that we hope to continue interacting with them in the future," he said.

The event was a wonderful show of gratitude, said Col. Guy Jordan, commanding

officer for III MHG at Camp Hansen.

"The Marines love coming out and volunteering because it gives us an opportunity to give back to Okinawa," Jordan said. "This is my second time coming to the appreciation dinner, and I enjoy myself every time."

Several Marines said they had an amazing time at the event and planned to continue their new friendship with the nursing home.

"It feels good to know the nursing home appreciates the things we do," said Lance Cpl. Ian Daily, a mechanic with 7th Comm. Bn. "Volunteering shows we care, and we're making an effort to maintain friendships with the Okinawan community. I definitely plan to come again in the future."

IN THEATERS

NOVEMBER 6 - NOVEMBER 12

Movie schedule is subject to change without notice. Call in advance to confirm show times. For a complete listing, visit <http://www.aafes.com>.

FOSTER 645-3465

TODAY The Stepfather (PG13), 6 p.m.; Zombieland (R), 9 p.m.

SATURDAY Julie & Julia (PG13), noon; Zombieland (R), 3 and 9 p.m.; Gamer (R) 6 p.m.

SUNDAY Michael Jackson's This Is It (PG), 1, 4, and 7 p.m.

MONDAY I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 7 p.m.

TUESDAY Sorority Row (R), 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY Shorts (PG) 1 p.m.; I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 4 p.m.; Sorority Row (R), 7 p.m.

THURSDAY Michael Jackson's This Is It (PG), 7 p.m.

KADENA 634-4422

TODAY I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 6 p.m.; Sorority Row (R), 9 p.m.

SATURDAY I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), noon; The Stepfather (PG13), 3 and 6 p.m.; Whiteout (R), 9 p.m.

SUNDAY I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 1 p.m.; The Stepfather (PG13), 4 p.m.; Sorority Row (R), 7 p.m.

MONDAY Whiteout (R), 7 p.m.

TUESDAY The Stepfather (PG13), 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs (PG), 3 p.m.; I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 7 p.m.

THURSDAY Gamer (R), 7 p.m.

FUTENMA 622-9616

TODAY The Final Destination (R), 6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY Michael Jackson's This Is It (PG), 4 and 7 p.m.

SUNDAY Julie & Julia (PG13), 4 and 7 p.m.

MONDAY Gamer (R), 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY Closed

WEDNESDAY Closed

THURSDAY Closed

COURTNEY 622-9616

TODAY Michael Jackson's This Is It (PG), 5 and 8:30 p.m.

SATURDAY Where the Wild Things Are (PG), 2 p.m.; Gamer (R), 7 p.m.

SUNDAY Gamer (R), 7 p.m.

MONDAY District 9 (R), 7 p.m.

TUESDAY Closed

WEDNESDAY The Stepfather (PG13), 7 p.m.

THURSDAY Closed

HANSEN 623-4564

TODAY Whiteout (R), 6 p.m.; I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 9 p.m.

SATURDAY Sorority Row (R), 7 and 10 p.m.

SUNDAY I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 2 p.m.; Sorority Row (R), 5:30 p.m.

MONDAY Michael Jackson's This Is It (PG), 7 p.m.

TUESDAY Michael Jackson's This Is It (PG), 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY I Can Do Bad All By Myself (PG13), 7 p.m.

THURSDAY The Stepfather (PG13), 7 p.m.

SCHWAB 625-2333

TODAY Where the Wild Things Are (PG), 7 p.m.

SATURDAY Gamer (R), 5 p.m.

SUNDAY The Final Destination (R), 5 p.m.

MONDAY-THURSDAY Closed

USO MOVIE NIGHTS

The USO hosts movie nights at the locations below.

For schedules and start times, call:

CAMP SCHWAB 625-3834

MCAS FUTENMA 636-2113

CAMP HANSEN 623-5011

KADENA AIR BASE 632-8781



For more information or to sign up, contact the Single Marine Program office at 645-3681.

All bus pick-up points will be at Semper Fit gyms or the Foster Fieldhouse.

SINGLE MARINE PROGRAM EVENTS

THANKSGIVING DINNER: NOV. 25

• Join us for Thanksgiving Dinner from 3 - 7 p.m. Nov. 25 at the Camp Foster Community Center. For more information, contact the SMP office.

TOYS FOR TOTS DUCK & COVER GOLF: DEC. 4

• Play at Awase Meadows Golf Course from 3 - 7 p.m. Dec. 4. Cost is one toy per player plus \$37 for E-4 and below, \$40 for E-5 through E-9 and \$45 for officers. Sign up begins Monday through Nov. 20. For more information, contact the SMP office.

SMP SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT: DEC. 4-5

• The tournament will be held on Camp Hansen. For more information, contact the SMP office.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

• Read with and mentor students with the Kinser Reading Program at Kinser Elementary School every Friday from 8 - 11 a.m.

• Spend time giving back to the local community by volunteering to clean-up at the Ai No Mura Nursing Home the fourth Friday of every month from 2:30 - 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 636-3092.

The Marine Thrift Shop supports the SMP, and by staying thrifty, so can you!

Marine Thrift Shop

Camp Foster, Building 5691 645-6025

Tues-Wed-Thurs: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sat: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

www.marinethriftshopokinawa.org

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

CAMP FOSTER | 645-7486

- **Catholic:** Mon.-Fri., 11:45 a.m.; Sat., 5 p.m.; Sun., 10 a.m.
- **Christian Science:** Sun., 11 a.m., Bldg. 442
- **Eastern Orthodox:** Sun., 9:30 a.m., Vespers, Sat., 5 p.m.
- **Gospel:** Sun., 11:30 a.m.
- **Hindu:** Sat., 3:30 p.m.
- **Jewish:** Fri., Traditional, 6 p.m.; Informal: 1st, 3rd Fri., 6:30 p.m.
- **Muslim:** Fri., Prayer, 12:45 p.m.
- **Protestant:** Sun., 8:30 a.m.
- **Seventh Day Adventist:** Sat., 10 a.m.

CAMP SCHWAB | 622-9350

- **Catholic:** Sun., 5:30 p.m.
- **Protestant:** Sun., 9 a.m.

CAMP COURTNEY | 622-9350

- **Catholic:** Sun., 8 and 11:15 a.m.; Mon.-Fri., 11:45 a.m.
- **Protestant:** Sun., 9:30 a.m.

CAMP KINSER | 637-1148

- **Catholic:** Sun., 11 a.m.
- **Protestant:** Sun., 9 a.m.

CAMP HANSEN | 622-9350

- **Catholic:** Sun., 10 a.m., E. Chapel
- **Protestant:** Sun., 11 a.m., W. Chapel

KADENA AIR BASE | 634-1288

- **Catholic:** Sun., 8:30 a.m., Mass, Chapel 3; Sun., 11:30 a.m., Reconciliation, Chapel 3; Sun., 12:30 p.m., Mass, Chapel 3; Sun., 5 p.m., Mass, Chapel 2; Daily Mass, Mon.-Fri., noon, Chapel 2
- **Contemporary:** Kadena High School; Sun., 10:30 a.m.
- **Gospel:** Chapel 3; Sunday School, 8:45 a.m., Bldg. 856
- **Inspirational:** Chapel 2; Sun., 8:30 a.m.
- **Protestant:** Sun., 10:30 a.m.
- **Traditional:** Chapel 2; Sun., 10:30 a.m.
- **Wiccan/Pagan:** Fri., 7 p.m., Bldg. 856; Sat., 6:30 p.m., Bldg. 856

CAMP LESTER | 643-7248

- **Catholic:** Sun., 8 a.m., Lester Chapel
- **Non-Denominational:** Sun., 9 a.m., Hospital Chapel; Sun., 10 a.m., Lester Chapel

CAMP McTUREOUS | 622-9350

- **Gospel:** Sun., 12:30 p.m.
- **Lutheran:** Sun., 9:30 a.m.
- **Protestant Lethurgical:** Sun., 6:30 p.m.

MCAS FUTENMA | 636-3058

- **Catholic:** Sun., noon
- **Contemporary:** Fri., 7 p.m.; Sun., 9 a.m.
- **High school senior service:** Sat. 6 p.m.

CLASSIFIED ADS

AUTOMOBILES

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VAN
JCI MAR 2010,
\$1,500 OBO
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Having reflectors on bicycle tires is key to keeping a rider visible to others on the road. Wearing a glow belt and attaching lights to the front and back of the bike will also increase visibility during low-light times of day, including early morning and late night.

Cycling, fun pastime on Okinawa

Lance Cpl. J Nava
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

From the northern end to the southern tip of the island, Okinawa's geography and terrain offers varying degrees of challenge for cyclists of all skill, cyclist enthusiast on Camp Foster.

Cycling also promotes good health and physical fitness among its practitioners, said Sgt. Maj. Cevet Adams, Marine Corps Bases Japan sergeant major.

"Cycling is another good form of cardiovascular exercise," Adams said. "It keeps you in really good condition. It's great for some of the older guys who are looking for a more low-impact exercise."

An important aspect of cycling is the equipment. Having the proper equipment can keep cyclists comfortable and safe, Adams said.



It's never too early to teach children bicycle safety. Robert Heite Jr., a 2-year-old, tries his father's bicycle helmet on for size before taking his tricycle out for a spin around Plaza Housing, Camp Foster.

"Cyclists need to be sure to have a bike that is durable, a repair kit and all the proper personal protective equipment," Adams said. "There are various places across the island and on the Internet where these items can be purchased."

Cyclist should also wear proper cycling attire," said Matt Luebbers, coach of the Marine Corps Community Services Okinawa Dolphins swim team and a 14-year cyclist.

"A good, comfortable pair of bike shorts is an absolute must in order to help get accustomed to the bike when you first start out," Luebbers said. "It will help you form your backside to the saddle and ride more comfortably."

Cyclists can choose different routes based on their skill level.

"The routes to ride on depend on your skill level and confidence in riding with traffic. The northern part of the island and Ikei Island are some of the more bike-friendly places to ride," Adams said. "No matter where you are riding, cyclists should know the rules of the road and be adjusted to the traffic conditions in Okinawa."

Safety is a key priority for cyclists on Okinawa, Luebbers said.

"You have to ride as if no one can see you. You have to act in such a way that you keep an eye on all your surroundings," Luebbers said. "Cyclists must always be alert for traffic."

Cycling safety will be especially important this weekend, according to Luebbers.

Saturday, the 20th annual Tour de Okinawa will begin at the Nago City Civic Center and end on Sunday. The Tour De Okinawa is one of Japan's largest cycling events featuring races from five kilometers to a two-day, 330 kilometer circumnavigation of the island.

"It's a really good race to participate in," Luebbers said. "This will be my thirteenth year in a row that I race in it. I love it."

Cycling is a good pastime for people looking for something to do on the island as long as the proper safety precautions are taken, explained Adams.

"I highly encourage it," he said.

"When you get out there and feel the breeze in your face, it's so freeing," Luebbers said. "Cycling is great."

Bicyclists must wear approved helmets while riding on all Marine Corps bases, and bicycles must be equipped with reflectors visible from front and back, according to Marine Corps Order 5100.19E. For additional safety regulations, see MCO 5100.19E.



Robert Heite Sr., with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262, Marine Aircraft Group 36, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, III Marine Expeditionary Force, ensures he wears his helmet and camelbak each time he takes his bike out for a ride.

Photo illustrations by Cpl. Rebekka Heite

Tour de Okinawa

For those interested in watching the Tour de Okinawa 2009, one good place to go is Nago Civic Center where the 200k race starts and all races end.

Be on the lookout for bicyclists in Nago and all points north Saturday and Sunday as riders participate in the races because roads will not be closed to vehicle traffic. Riders will be starting races of varying lengths from the Nago Civic Center, Kunigami Road Station and Hedomisaki on the northern tip of the island.

All races will finish at the Nago Civic Center, and the center will host a closing ceremony and awards presentation Sunday at 3:30 p.m.